

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
WESTERN DIVISION

ANTHONY SMITH, :
 :
Plaintiff, : Case No. 3:09cv422
 :
vs. : JUDGE WALTER HERBERT RICE
 :
COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY, :
 :
Defendant. :

DECISION AND ENTRY REJECTING REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE (DOC. #12) IN THEIR ENTIRETY; PLAINTIFF'S OBJECTIONS TO SAID JUDICIAL FILING (DOC. #13) SUSTAINED; JUDGMENT TO BE ENTERED IN FAVOR OF PLAINTIFF AND AGAINST DEFENDANT COMMISSIONER, VACATING COMMISSIONER'S DECISION THAT PLAINTIFF WAS NOT DISABLED AND, THEREFORE, NOT ENTITLED TO BENEFITS UNDER THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT AND REMANDING THE CAPTIONED CAUSE TO THE DEFENDANT COMMISSIONER, PURSUANT TO SENTENCE FOUR OF 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), FOR FURTHER ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS CONSISTENT WITH THIS DECISION AND ENTRY; TERMINATION ENTRY

Plaintiff has brought this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) to review a decision of the Defendant Commissioner denying Plaintiff's application for Social Security disability benefits. On December 9, 2010, the United States Magistrate Judge filed a Report and Recommendations (Doc. #12), recommending that the Commissioner's decision that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act be affirmed. Based upon a thorough de

novo review of this Court's file, including the Administrative Transcript (Doc. #6), and a thorough review of the applicable law, this Court rejects the aforesaid Report and Recommendations in their entirety and, in so doing, orders the entry of judgment in favor of the Plaintiff and against Defendant Commissioner, concluding that the Commissioner's decision that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act was not supported by substantial evidence. The Plaintiff's Objections to said judicial filing (Doc. #13) are sustained. Accordingly, the decision of the Defendant Commissioner that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act is vacated, and the captioned cause is remanded to the Defendant Commissioner, pursuant to Sentence Four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), for further administrative proceedings consistent with this decision and entry.

In reviewing the Commissioner's decision, the Magistrate's task is to determine if that decision is supported by "substantial evidence." 42 U.S.C. § 405(g). Under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C), this Court, upon objections being made to the Magistrate Judge's Report and Recommendations, is required to make a de novo review of those recommendations of the report to which objection is made. This de novo review, in turn, requires this Court to re-examine all the relevant evidence, previously reviewed by the Magistrate, to determine whether the findings of the Secretary [now Commissioner] are supported by "substantial evidence." Lashley v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 708 F.2d 1048, 1053 (6th Cir.

1983); Gibson v. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, 678 F.2d 653, 654 (6th Cir. 1982). This Court's sole function is to determine whether the record as a whole contains substantial evidence to support the Commissioner's decision. The Commissioner's findings must be affirmed if they are supported by "such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion." Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971), citing Consolidated Edison Company v. NLRB, 305 U.S. 197, 229 (1938); Landsaw v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 803 F.2d 211, 213 (6th Cir. 1986). Substantial evidence means such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion. Richardson, supra, at 401; Ellis v. Schweicker, 739 F.2d 245, 248 (6th Cir. 1984). Substantial evidence is more than a mere scintilla, but only so much as would be required to prevent a directed verdict (now judgment as a matter of law) against the Commissioner if this case were being tried to a jury. Foster v. Bowen, 853 F.2d 483, 486 (6th Cir. 1988); NLRB v. Columbian Enameling and Stamping Company, 306 U.S. 292, 300 (1939). To be substantial, the evidence "must do more than create a suspicion of the existence of the fact to be established... [I]t must be enough to justify, if the trial were to a jury, a refusal to direct a verdict when the conclusion sought to be drawn from it is one of fact for the jury." LeMaster v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 802 F.2d 839, 840 (6th Cir. 1986), quoting NLRB v. Columbian Enameling and Stamping Company, supra.

In determining whether the Commissioner's findings are supported by substantial evidence, the Court must consider the record as a whole. Hephner v. Mathews, 574 F.2d 359 (6th Cir. 1978); Ellis, supra; Kirk v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 667 F.2d 524, 536 (6th Cir. 1981); Houston v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 736 F.2d 365 (6th Cir. 1984); Garner v. Heckler, 745 F.2d 383 (6th Cir. 1984). However, the Court may not try the case de novo, resolve conflicts in evidence or decide questions of credibility. Garner, supra. The findings of the Commissioner of Social Security and proceedings on Claimant's application for social security disability benefits are not subject to reversal merely because there exists in the record substantial evidence to support a different conclusion. Buxton v. Halter, Commissioner of Social Security, 246 F.3d 762 (6th Cir. 2001). If the Commissioner's decision is supported by substantial evidence, it must be affirmed, even if the Court as a trier of fact would have arrived at a different conclusion. Elkins v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 658 F.2d 437, 439 (6th Cir. 1981).

In addition to the foregoing, in ruling as aforesaid, this Court makes the following, non-exclusive, observations:

1. Having read the decision of the Administrative Law Judge, Tr. 11-21, this Court finds the Objections of the Plaintiff (Doc. #13) to be both accurate and well taken. In short, the Administrative Law Judge failed to consider the entirety of

the record, as a whole, in that he gave "short shrift" to Plaintiff's history of psychiatric/psychological symptoms and disabilities from the age of nine onward. While the Magistrate Judge has stated that "[p]laintiff has failed to explain how evidence that is twenty and more years old is more relevant to his current ability to perform substantial gainful activity than is the contemporary evidence which the record contains," this Court believes that contemporary evidence cannot be understood in a vacuum. In other words, contemporary evidence, such as it is, must be evaluated within the context of the record as a whole, to wit: the Plaintiff's longstanding record of psychiatric/psychological conditions and disabilities. The failure to do so, renders the Administrative Law Judge's opinion one rendered without a consideration of the record as a whole and, accordingly, one that is unsupported by substantial evidence.


2. Upon remand, the Administrative Law Judge, must consider, inter alia, with the assistance of an examining mental health professional, the specific details of the entire longitudinal history of the Plaintiff's mental health impairments, along with taking any and all other necessary steps needed to determine whether the Plaintiff is under a disability within the meaning of the Social Security Act.

WHEREFORE, based upon the aforesaid, this Court rejects the Report and Recommendations of the United States Magistrate Judge (Doc. #12) in their entirety, having concluded that the Commissioner's decision that Plaintiff was not

disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act was not supported by substantial evidence. Plaintiff's Objections to said judicial filing (Doc. #13) are sustained. Judgment will be ordered entered in favor of the Plaintiff and against the Defendant Commissioner, vacating the decision of the Defendant Commissioner that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act, and remanding the captioned cause to the Defendant Commissioner, pursuant to Sentence Four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

The captioned cause is hereby ordered terminated upon the docket records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Western Division, at Dayton.

March 28, 2011



WALTER HERBERT RICE, JUDGE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

Copies to:

Counsel of record